

Why eating fruits and vegetables is important for adults



People who eat 2½ to 4½ cups of fruits and vegetables a day have a lower chance of getting many cancers.

HELP MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT

When combined with an active lifestyle, eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help you manage your weight. Most are low in calories and fat. And many have lots of water and fiber to help you feel full.

You can eat fewer calories and still eat a satisfying amount of food when you eat more fruits and vegetables at meals and less foods high in fat and added sugars. Eat fruits and vegetables raw or steamed and use very small amounts of added sauces, butters, or oils.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR SOME CANCERS

People who eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables have a lower chance of getting cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx, larynx, lung, esophagus, stomach, and colon-rectum.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR HEART DISEASE & STROKE

Heart-healthy diets emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. They include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. They are also low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars. People who consume such diets are likely to lower their blood pressure and cholesterol and have a reduced risk of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.

REDUCE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

In the DASH study (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), people with high blood pressure followed a special eating plan. These people saw their blood pressure go down after only one month. The plan included 4 to 5 cups of fruits and vegetables a day and 2 to 3 cups of low-fat dairy foods.

The DASH eating plan is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. The plan allows only very small amounts of red meat, sweets, and sugar-containing drinks. It also includes moderate amounts of whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts.

People in the DASH study with the lowest sodium intake had the biggest fall in blood pressure. Too much sodium causes blood pressure to rise. Potassium counteracts the effect of sodium on blood pressure. Yet, African Americans get only half their potassium needs. Fruits and vegetables are naturally high in potassium and low in sodium.

LOWER YOUR CHANCES FOR DIABETES

Obesity and diet are strong risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes. So it is important to be at a healthy weight. Get enough exercise and eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables every day.